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October 21, 2016

Chairman Tom Wheeler
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

**In the Matter of: Nomination for Universal Service Administrative Company Board of
Directors, CC Docket Nos. 97-21 and 96-45.**

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

The American Library Association (ALA) respectfully nominates Robert Bocher for re-appointment to the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) Board of Directors to fill the library position. Mr. Bocher currently serves on the Board but was appointed in 2015 to fill the seat that had been vacant since 2013. We feel strongly that to appoint someone other than Mr. Bocher at this juncture would be a disservice to the library community as we had no representation during the critical modernization period. Mr. Bocher is extremely well qualified to serve on the Board, but regardless of his qualifications, we believe the library community needs the continuity that his reappointment would ensure.

While much progress has been made since the modernization proceeding, library applicants continue to have issues navigating the program changes such that we are concerned libraries may not fully take advantage of the new program rules and funding. We want to see library participation in the E-rate program increase as well as more library applications for much higher broadband capacity to realize the 1 gigabit goal. To accomplish this, the library community needs a representative who is intimately knowledgeable about the application process and who also has a nuanced perspective of the goals of the current E-rate program. We are confident that Mr. Bocher's expertise with network design and management and his deep commitment to library issues will help ensure libraries are able to take advantage of the new E-rate opportunities. Mr. Bocher's expertise will also help ensure USAC has the knowledge base necessary to continue to improve upon the implementation of the new rules efficiently and effectively so that the Commission's program goals can be met.

Mr. Bocher began his long tenure advocating for library technology and broadband capacity issues in the early days of the E-rate program serving as the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's (WDPI) state-wide E-rate support manager. Mr. Bocher currently serves as a Senior Fellow for ALA's Office for Information Technology Policy and serves on ALA's E-rate task force. Mr. Bocher combines a unique skill set of understanding the applicant experience and network technology at a practical level as well as the relationship between policy development and the implementation of Commission rules. He maintains an understanding of the policy and politics at the national level.

Mr. Bocher brings additional broadband network design and management expertise through his work with Wisconsin's research and education network, WiscNet, which provides internet access to the majority of the state's libraries and K12 schools and BadgerNet the state's broadband network. Mr. Bocher is remarkably well-versed on broadband deployment issues as is exemplified through his contribution to Wisconsin's $27 million BTOP project and a subsequent state-initiated project in 2014 to bring fiber to 362 public libraries in the state. Through this project over 90% of the libraries now have a fiber connection. This experience is critical to address the connectivity needs in a majority of the nation's libraries and we are confident Mr. Bocher's experience in this area will make a tremendous difference for all library applicants.

Mr. Bocher's diverse experience will also contribute to the management and oversight of USAC's administration of the E-rate program specifically and of the Universal Service Fund (USF) generally. During his tenure at WDPI, Mr. Bocher managed over $40 million in grants from the Library Services and Technology Act funding and he managed five state-wide grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Today this knowledge base is ever more essential as USAC continues to improve the performance management system and applicant experience. Mr. Bocher is amply prepared to provide a strong hand in a collaborative spirit to help USAC accomplish its near term goals while helping to shape a longer vision as the Commission continues to address complicated issues that impact USF programs and the respective constituents.

Finally, Mr. Bocher is well respected and known within the U.S. library community on E-rate and telecommunications matters. In addition to his professional work and committee work on these subjects, he has spoken publicly on these issues many times, such as at ALA conferences, Schools, Health, and Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB) conferences, and has also represented libraries at the FCC. ALA is confident that Mr. Bocher will provide the necessary leadership on the USAC Board of Directors—one of the most important policy bodies for libraries.

A copy of Mr. Bocher's professional biography is attached. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Emily Sheketoff
Executive Director
American Library Association
Washington Office

Marijke Visser
Associate Director,
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Summary of Qualifications

- Over thirty-five years of program administration and project management experience focused on library and school technology—including Internet access and broadband connectivity.
- Serve as the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's statewide E-rate support manager since the E-rate's inception. This includes providing support to 424 school districts and 386 public libraries. Author the department's comments to the Federal Communications Commission on the E-rate program.
- Current member and former chair of the American Library Association's E-rate Task Force. Consult with ALA's Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP) on E-rate issues.
- Member of the State E-rate Coordinators Alliance (SECA).
- Co-authored a $27 million BTOP grant to bring fiber connectivity to 387 Wisconsin libraries and schools. (While the grant was awarded the State of Wisconsin ultimately declined it.)
- Served on the WiscNet board, 2000 – 2012. (WiscNet is the state's Research and Education Network. Over eighty percent of Wisconsin's K-12 schools and ninety percent of its public libraries get Internet access via WiscNet.)
- Serve on the state's BadgerNet Advisory Council. (BadgerNet is the state's broadband network providing connectivity to over 920 libraries and schools.)
- Serve on the state Public Service Commission's Broadband Advisory Group.
- Managed a project in 2014 to bring fiber to 362 public libraries in the state. (Over ninety percent of libraries now have fiber.)
- Recipient of the Department of Public Instruction's Outstanding Employee Achievement Award and the Wisconsin Library Association's Special Service Award.

Work Experience

- 1975 – 1980: Library Assistant. Wisconsin Supreme Court Law Library. Madison, WI.
- 1980 – 1990: Manager of WISCAT, the statewide library catalog of over 2 million titles from 435 libraries. Wisconsin Reference and Loan Library. Madison, WI.
- 1990 – 2012: Technology Consultant, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, State Library Division.
- 2009 – Present: Fellow at the American Library Association's Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP). Primarily consult on E-rate and broadband issues.
- 2012 – Present: Consult for the Department of Public Instruction providing statewide E-rate and broadband support to public libraries and K-12 schools.

Education

- BA Secondary Education and History, University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh.
- MA Library and Information Science, University of Wisconsin – Madison